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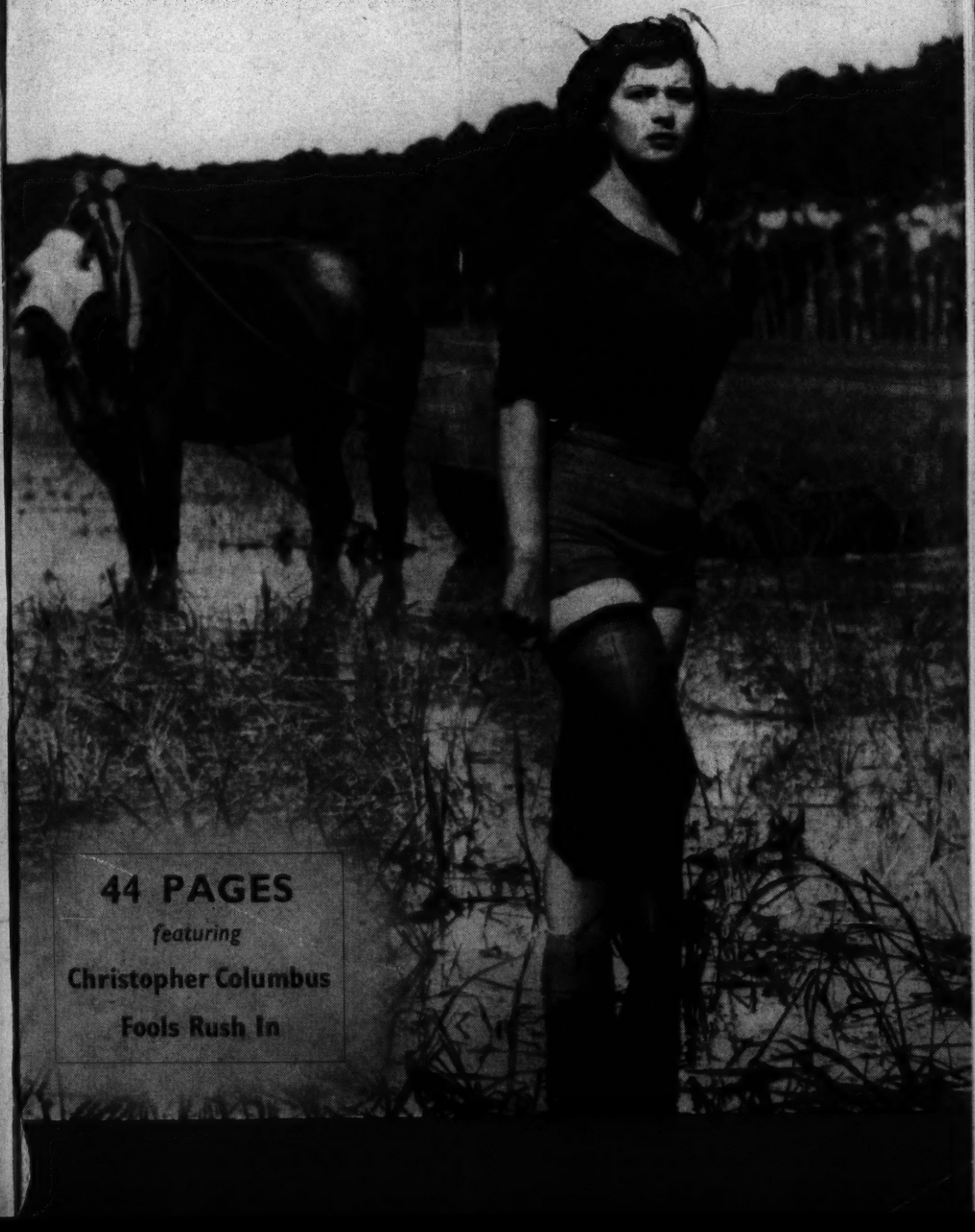

44 PAGES

featuring

Christopher Columbus

Fools Rush In

THE ACADEMY CINEMA

Presents

Two Dore Schary Films

THE WINDOW

with

Bobby Driscoll

and

THEY LIVE BY NIGHT

with

Cathy O'Donnell and

Farley Granger

Film Monthly Review

JUNE, 1949 Vol. 7, No. 6

EDITORIAL

WHEN two such widely different film makers as Anthony Asquith (*The Way to the Stars*) and R. J. Minney (*The Wicked Lady*) advocate nationalisation as the only hope for the British film industry, then we say it is high time the Government began to act.

"For cultural and artistic reasons," declares Asquith, "we clearly should be making as many films as possible. For economic reasons our film industry should be making a substantial contribution towards the recovery of the nation.

"Those who control the industry have failed to put their own house in order and show no signs of being able to do so, however long the crisis lasts."

And Minney rightly points out that the B.B.C. successfully caters for all tastes. There is no reason at all why a Government-controlled film industry could not do the same.

We repeat: the Government must intervene—quickly.

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Edited by Robert Hirst

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HAVE WE NO TIME FOR HUMANITY ?

BY R. E. WHITEHALL

Will films about racial intolerance sharpen our emotions to a keener social awareness ? Or will they just be a succession of box-office flops ?

SOME time ago I had a discussion with a certain film critic who argued that cinematic assaults on racial intolerance were of purely nominal interest, and that anyone who was anti-Semitic would not be converted by *Crossfire*. A few days later, Edward Dmytryk, the eminent director of the film, addressed a meeting of documentary film workers, in the course of which he declared that *Crossfire* had not been made for the rabid anti-Semites — who are primarily psychiatric cases, anyway—but for the "groundlings" who were unconsciously infected with the disease.

" Crossfire " Fulfils Purpose

Mr. Dmytryk produced facts and figures to prove that *Crossfire* had fulfilled its purpose of exposing the ignorant fictions on which this sectional hatred survives. The film was given two previews before it was sent out on release, and the results of this audience testing are illuminating.

At a preview, an audience is given cards on which to write its comments, and these are tabulated by the studio. *Crossfire* was previewed in Los Angeles and, as a result, the studio received some 500 cards (a very high proportion, far higher than the studio expected) with no objections raised. The producers, thinking this might be a fluke reception, arranged another preview, this time in the Yorkville District of New York. This predominantly German neighbourhood, notorious as a hotbed of the German-American Bund before the war, was expected to yield a high proportion of audience objections—yet only 2 per cent. were forthcoming.

Some time earlier, Doré Schary, in charge of production at RKO-Radio at the time *Crossfire* was made, disclosed that of 2,200 opinions tested, either at previews or through the mails, 93 per cent. were enthusiastic and approved of the film, 5 per cent. were cautious in expressing an opinion, and only 2 per cent. were anti-Semitic in character. This appears to bear out Schary's contention that the film did get on with the job of insulating people against a violent and virulent anti-Semitism.

Unfortunately the film has not been followed up, and this is the tragedy of a Hollywood dominated by an anti-Red scare. Dmytryk closed his lecture with the warning that a film like *Crossfire* will do no good unless it is followed up and the ground gained in showing that film is consolidated. *Crossfire* achieved its purpose, but people are forgetful; and its good work would be dissipated by lack of effective backing unless its messages were periodically amplified. and increased.

Where "Gentleman's Agreement" failed completely. Kathy (Dorothy McGuire) conquers her anti-Semitic prejudice because she loves Philip (Gregory Peck).

Failure of "Gentleman's Agreement"

That is what *Gentleman's Agreement* was singularly unsuccessful in doing, and I can only quote the remark of a member of the audience at a certain suburban cinema when I saw the film. "It's probably doing a good job," he said, "but I wish it would get a move on." The film crept along, bowed under its weight of dialogue, until the falsity of the ending caused the entire film to collapse completely. Almost every point in this film was aural, instead of visual, and the dialogue, even in the hands of Moss Hart, was not calculated to keep an audience's interest. Twice during the film a breath of life flashed through it—when the dialogue had been pushed to one side, and on the rare occasions when the film moved away from its goldfish-bowl view of life in a magazine office. The first was the silent reaction at the lunch table after the leading character has remarked that he is a Jew, and the second was the sequence in the "restricted" hotel. The rest was sense without sensibility; where it should have blazed with an unquenchable flame it

smouldered like a guttering candle.

When the London film critics saw the film they all seemed to miss its point completely, airily pointing out that Britain had nothing so virulent as this. Of course it hasn't, we've been at it longer and become far more diplomatic about it; but clucking over a typewriter to the effect that "it doesn't happen here to the same extent" is closing one's eyes to a most unpleasant subject which has as much validity in this country as in America.

After the Purge . . .

Unfortunately, the Hollywood purge of 1947 caused the interment of many progressive ideas; but films must sometimes carry ideas, if they are to keep progressing. And gradually, subtly, the ideas began to creep back. *Apartment for Peggy,* for instance, a film which wasn't to the taste of the London film critics, had more progressive ideas concentrated into the running time of one film than will be found in a year's output from British studios.

Now, Hollywood is back at the job of attacking racial intolerance with all the force at its disposal —and the forces of Hollywood are still the strongest in the world; harnessed properly (misquoting a certain well-known film critic) they might have prevented the war. *The Boy with Green Hair* is on the way, coupling war and racial intolerance, and a whole group of new films is being made which "take off the gloves" to that most rabid and deep-rooted hatred of all, the colour bar.

The Colour Bar

Hollywood has come to realise that hatred on the basis of colour is the crucial point for attack. Once you have won the admission that a colour of a man's skin is no crime to be held against him, it is made comparatively easier to sweep away the false concepts of religious bigotry and intolerance. The anti-Semite, unless he is of the most rabid type, usually grudgingly admits that there are "exceptions," but the colour-hatred is a blanketing hatred which admits of no exceptions.

What are these Negro themes? John Ford is directing *Pinky* for Darryl Zanuck, with Jeanne Crain, William Lundigan, and Ethel Waters in the leading roles. Stanley Kramer has just completed *Home of the Brave,* in 18 days' shooting-time — this, of course, is a film version of the Arthur Laurentz play, "The Way Back," with the hero turned from a Jew into a Negro. Louis de Rochement is producing *Lost Boundaries,* dealing with the increasing number of light-skinned Negroes who are passing as white; while *Intruder in the Dust,* from the William Faulkner novel, and Sinclair Lewis' *Kingsblood Royal* are on the 1949 production line-up.

John Ford has explained the approach of his film in a Press statement. "We are not seeking to attack any section of the country or any group of people, but a bigotry that should have been uprooted from the American scene a long time ago. We are trying to give a fair picture without any bias one way or another."

As citizens of a Commonwealth in which live 40 per cent. of the Negroes in the world—against 10 per cent. in the United States—this a subject that is by no means localised in interest to the American scene. Racial intolerance is careless as to whom it attacks; but will this intense concentration on a vital subject wear itself out? Only time can tell us whether we have films that will sharpen our emotions to a keener social awareness, or a succession of box-office flops.

THE FILM CRISIS

BY A TECHNICIAN

"Why should I and my family be the major sufferers?" scathingly asks a "redundant" film technician.

NEARLY everyone has had a go at solving the crisis in the film industry — producers, reporters and politicians have voiced their opinions, with the old hardy slogan of "CUT THE STARS' SALARIES" as first favourite among the suggestions. The chap who feels the chopper most—the studio worker, who is the first to be sacrificed when the economy bug bites hard, gets little publicity for his point of view.

Ill-planned Locations

Expensive and ill-planned locations are not the fault of the worker. He has no say in their conception and is only the automatic pawn in the carrying out of the production plans made at allegedly inspired higher levels. Yet he is the first victim of any extravagant failure. One such location last year cost over £200,000. Few scenes will be included in the film, which has since been re-shot in the studio. The quarter of a million pounds wasted would have paid the wages of all the redundant workers at the employing studios for the whole of the 12 months which Mr. Rank envisages as the period necessary to carry the industry over the hill.

The problem to the worker must, of necessity, have a "bread-and-butter" appearance. He cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that the wages agreements with the Unions and the Associates expire at the end of next month, and when fresh negotiations are opened for new wages agreements, the Unions, with three-fifths of their membership unemployed, will be in a far weaker bargaining position than would be the case with a fully employed membership.

Again, the worker is worried over that 45 per cent. quota—or alleged 45 per cent. quota. He cannot understand why producers openly state that they cannot fulfil their quota the first year (at the same time closing studios), and why the majority of the 3,000 independent exhibitors can claim exemption from operating the quota and can bask in the sunshine of the box office, resulting from unrestricted exhibition of the best American pictures.

Mr. Rank states that it is economically impossible, with present costs, to satisfy the quota without a financial loss. The main circuits—Gaumont-British, Odeon and A.B.C. theatres—claiming the first run on British

films made in their associate studios, it is obviously uneconomical for an independently controlled cinema to play the same film for a second or third run in the same town, after it has been well "milked" and public patronage fairly exhausted.

More Films—Not Less

The logical conclusion then is for more British films to be made —not less. Why penalise the worker for the fact that they are too costly? Is he to blame for the ill-prepared scripting which results in weeks of re-shooting and the scrapping of whole scenes, which have taken weeks to shoot, with its consequent heavy cost of set construction and unit labour? Is he to blame that, due to faulty planning, there are big gaps in what should be smooth and constant continuity in shooting? He is not allowed prior consultation on production.

Yet, when the axe drops, out go men, many of whom have known no other trade. The camera-operators are mostly men who have worked their way up from clapper-boys. No other industry but the film industry requires *film* camera-operators. No other industry needs boom-operators, film editors, film sound-dubbers, first-, second- and third-assistant film directors. These men who have, over the years, developed their standard of living and justifiably anticipated a continuance of that standard of living, because they were skilled specialists in a basic industry, now go on to the labour market to start all over again as unskilled workers! It's fantastic!

Best Years of Their Lives

It's doubly fantastic that while there is a paramount need for more and more British films to satisfy the quota needs of *all* cinemas, studios should close and workers who have given the best of their working years should be thrown on the scrap heap.

Can it be wondered at that the bewildered worker, noting how the Government (which, in the main, is supported by film-studio employees) has come to the rescue of other major industries, whose stable structure has been threatened through inefficiency, considers that the Government should act now in his case. Or that he thinks, to safeguard his livelihood, that the strict letter of the quota law should be applied to ALL exhibitors; that independent producers ready with material should be given every facility to start immediate needs; that the Government should commandeer idle studios to this effect and grant a subsidy, if necessary, in order to save Britain's own film industry.

Of one thing the worker is fully convinced—irrespective of any "pie in the sky" statements made by others—and that is, there is a very real crisis in the film industry. And to him that crisis signifies the end of his hopes and livelihood.

He knows that, logically, there should be a British film-production boom where now there is despair. He knows that, logically, the situation is fantastic.

But what he fails to understand is why he and his family should be the major sufferers.

—By courtesy of "The Cine-Technician."

Where are they now?

BY GEORGE MASON

And here the editor of "The Cine-Technician" tells us what the sacked 2,500 are now doing, in order to live

WITH the crisis in the film industry putting a total of something like two thousand five hundred technicians out of work, it is interesting to discover how they are earning their living until the industry is back on its feet.

"Until the industry is back on its feet"—this sets a problem. In finding a fill-in job, the first thing a prospective employer wants to know is, "Do you intend going back to the film industry?" It's a natural question. He doesn't want to employ somebody who will leave as soon as the opportunity to return to film work occurs.

So, for film technicians intending to return to film work, but needing a job meantime, the problem can be ticklish.

Nevertheless, many of the boys and girls of the industry have found jobs and here are some of them.

For continuity girls the obvious choice is a secretarial or shorthand-typist post, and many girls have had to take jobs in this capacity. With their previous usage of shorthand and typing it is an obvious step.

But it is a different kettle of fish for a camera-operator, or an assistant director. A cameraman cannot easily fit into commerce, nor trade, not with his film experience. What does he do? He usually has to turn his hand to something more ordinary.

But one camera-operator has converted part of his house into a portrait studio, complete with dark-room, enlarger, and the technical equipment necessary for professional photography. In his converted dark-room he has even blocked up the chimney!

Assistant Director—Now Clerk

An assistant director has returned to clerical work; a film cutter worked, for a short time, as a filing clerk at Somerset House—it nearly drove him crazy and he left. Another cutter has joined the police force, and a trainee assistant director is now a sales representative with an advertising agency.

Some are driving lorries for a living, others are in businesses of their own. Two still-photographers have formed a partnership, bought and opened a portrait studio. Another technician joined the staff of a borough council and is part of a house-cleaning-service team — spring-cleaning carpets, furniture, etc. The studio scenic artist—the back-cloth specialist — has turned, mechanically, to the theatre, wherever possible; a camera maintenance man has joined an engineering firm.

Of the more normal trades essential to film production—electricians, carpenters, accountants, clerks, it is, presumably, a case of switching the same trade to another firm. But the technical

(*Continued on page* 10)

FILM PERIODICALS REVIEWED

"This Film Business" is the title of the first of the "Impact Books on Film," edited by Paul Sheridan. These magazines are both candid and constructive. "This Film Business" includes "What Makes the Movies?" by Dilys Powell; "Purpose in Criticism" (Ernest Lindgren); "Approach to Cartoon-Film Scripting" (John Halas and Joy Batchelor); "Searchlight on the Indian Film Industry" (Paul Zils); and "In Italy To-day" (Frances Mullin Clark). Price 2s.

The second of these quarterlies, "Sense and Censorship," costs only 1s. 6d. and is very good value indeed. Paul Sheridan writes an extremely knowledgeable article on "Films—and How Not to Produce Them"; Roger Manvell describes "Puritanism and the Cinema"; the suppression of the popular B.B.C. feature, "Picture Parade," is dealt with by Marcel Jacquier; there is an amusing satire, "How to Publish a Film Magazine"; Frances Mullin Clark writes comprehensively on "Freedom and the Italian Cinema"; and most of the other features are also well worth reading.

"Sequence 7," edited by Lindsay Anderson, Peter Ericsson and Gavin Lambert, is as harshly critical as the preceding numbers of this quarterly. The quality of thought behind the many film criticisms is certainly high; unfortunately, however, the style of writing is often diffuse and amateurish. But "Sequence" is doing a good job and deserves the support of the serious filmgoer. This number features "British Cinema: The Descending Spiral" (Lindsay Anderson); an appreciation of Micheline Presle; an article by that fine French actor, Gérard Philipe; "Chaplin as Pierrot" by Henry Raynor; and several other articles. Price 2s. 6d.

(*Continued from page 9*)

men will suffer—the men with experience of no use to any other industry.

Dress designers lean naturally to the leading fashion houses in the West End, but this market is already pretty full. Hairdressers, wardrobe and make-up girls have no choice but shop work.

The Lure of the Studios

Meanwhile, as an ex-publicity man going the rounds myself, I meet and hear about some of my own clan. Several of those I know are doing nothing but living on their savings and a little free-lance journalism. Film jobs are few and far between and Fleet Street is overcrowded, in spite of the recent paper increase. Meanwhile capital is running out. Inevitably, whatever attachments you may have for film production, a secure job has to be found. What to do? A married man with a family has little choice and his margin for taking chances is more slender. But, whatever the outcome, I should hate to sever all connections with British film production. And this, I am sure, is how we all feel—though the bread-and-butter problem may keep us away, there is an indefinable something about working in a film studio, which tempts us to return even if, for a more consistent income, it would be wiser to stay away.

SOME COMPE-TITION FOR CHAPLIN

by H. H. WOLLENBERG

Dr. Wollenberg introduces an artist who may one day take Chaplin's place.

Charlie Chaplin in "The Great Dictator."

CHARLES CHAPLIN, the little cockney who raised slapstick to the level of great art, is now sixty. And it would seem timely to look around for a potential successor.

This would indeed appear to be a daring venture. For Chaplin, the writer, the director, the producer, and, of course, *the* star of his own productions is, without doubt, quite unique.

However, there is one man who seems to be well worth watching. As yet, both he and his films are completely unknown outside his own country; but there, within the last few years, he has gained an

immense popularity, just as Charlie did with his early short comedies. And, like Chaplin, he is creative in the true sense of the word—his subjects are based on his own ideas, he writes his own scenarios, and he directs his pictures himself.

And he has the good fortune to live in a country that is not only prolific in screen talent, but is also the proud possessor of traditionally discriminating audiences.

His name—Nils Poppe. His country—Sweden.

At last year's Venice Film Festival one of his productions was viewed by an international audience for the first time. Its title was *Pengar* (Money) and, as the best and most amusing comedy, it won the Grand Prix for its writer-director-star. The audience and the jury were all fascinated by its sparkling humour. Reminiscent of René Clair and Frank Capra at their best, the film yet has a style completely of its own.

The story is about a penniless tramp named Harry, who intends committing suicide. But he meets another tramp, of a philosophic mind, who convinces him that life is wonderful after all, and that money only serves to cause disunity among men.

Harry joins an isolated gang of forestry workers, adorned by a lovely girl who does the cooking for them. Here he finds work but is badly treated by his mates. They learn, while he is away at work, that he has inherited a vast fortune from a mysterious millionaire. From now on, he is treated with the utmost courtesy by the men until they get him to make a will in their favour. Then they try to kill him and get hold of his fortune, of which he himself knows nothing. However, they are unsuccessful in their attempts. Harry, at last, learns of the legacy, to which, however, a very awkward time-clause is attached. He and the girl rush to the solicitor's office, but they are just one minute late; the fortune goes to nobody else but that same philosophical tramp who doesn't believe in money. Harry manages to find himself a job with the State Bank. Every step here is controlled and watched. One gag, in fact, follows another and makes you scream. When he is ordered to burn vast heaps of devalued notes, his own last note, representing all his savings, flutters by accident into the fire. Without money, without the girl, Harry once more starts walking the endless road of the tramp . . .

It is impossible to convey more than the gist of the film in so short a synopsis; but I can assure you that this picture is more than a mere collection of gags; on the contrary, it has a message that concerns us all. But, above all, it bears the signature of a great new screen personality — Nils Poppe, who will, I feel quite sure, one day assume the mantle of the Great Charlie.

Nils Poppe with the foresters in "Money."

BY BRIAN ROBINS

"Film Monthly Review" Studio Reporter

IN sharp contrast to the current trend in popular opinion towards pessimism about the condition of British feature production, a renewed confidence in the ability of the industry to survive the economic blizzard is the feeling shared now by the 2,500 technicians — distributed around the country's twenty-seven studios—who have been victims of unemployment in recent weeks.

Outlook Brighter

Within four weeks the number of studios in active production has increased from five to thirteen, and shooting continues now on twelve major pictures as compared with four a month ago. This revival in the production programme has coincided with the end of an official strike by studio electricians, and, more important, the re-opening of studios which had been unused for some time in Manchester, and at Hammersmith and Southall.

Constantly, throughout the difficult weeks of slump and strike, the Wardour Street cynics claimed that a drastic reduction in studio administrative staffs was the best method to cut inflated production costs. All the major companies and groups tightened their purse-strings and offices were de-populated. Many fully-qualified technicians were cut off from film-making by the financial axe, and this applied to the most senior grades. Symptomatic of this re-organisation was the decision of the Rank Organisation to confine its large production resources this year to the making of only 25 films—each on an average, modest budget of £180,000.

Now that the orgy of sacking is over, it is clear that high minimum salaries fixed by studio trade

Jack Warner

unions for the benefit of technicians is not the primary cause of exorbitant costs in film production. Studio rentals around the £2,000-a-week mark are likely to be slashed as a stimulus to the less prosperous independent producers to move into vacant stages in the biggest studios, which are expensive to maintain empty. This development may lead to the re-opening soon of the former Gainsborough studios at Lime Grove, Shepherd's Bush.

Extensive Pre-planning

Although a small number of stars, directors and producers have agreed to work on a profit-sharing basis—each taking a proportionate share of box-office receipts when their film is shown—the most significant factor in the campaign to make pictures more cheaply is the sudden enthusiasm for extensive pre-planning of films before they are shot on the studio floor.

Alec Guiness

The thorough working-out of shooting details at the script stage has been a standard practice in the United States for many years, but not until recently in this country—where architect David Rawnsley's scheme for Independent Frame production has exposed the wasteful nature of conventional British technique—has the need for more efficient and careful planning of shooting been grasped.

Moira Lister

Gone for ever are the days when a unit could occupy studio space and work through a production for months on an elastic and generous budget, with writers composing script as they went along, directors planning action on the spur of the moment, and lighting-cameramen dreaming up lamp positions between each set-up.

The outcome of better-planned pictures and shorter shooting schedules must be more films per year from British studios. Less time wasted on studio floors means more rapid, and more frequent production.

Important—Second Features

But although it might seem that the increasing number of pictures in production heralds the convalescence of this 50-year-old business after its bankrupt malady, there is nothing to

Jimmy Hanley

indicate that we shall see sufficient of the smaller-feature films that we need so urgently in order to provide a solid, permanent basis to film production. A high output of popular, modestly-made and money-spinning films is essential, if more ambitious and brilliant directors and producers are to continue to make expensive, prestige pictures unfettered by cramping box-office considerations, and without the risk of exhausting the industry's financial resources. The National Film Finance Corporation's recent loans to six producing and four distributing companies will act more as

Dirk Bogarde

a subsidy for second-feature production than anything else, but the effect of that all-important help will not be enjoyed by the cinema public for many months.

Films in Production

Meanwhile, a survey of current production reveals that most of our studios are handling a ponderous load of films, which, while they do not all qualify for the title of prestige picture, must be regarded as first-rate in terms of expense, and importance.

(*Continued on page* 42)

HAS BRITISH COMEDY DECLINED?
and
THE FREEDOM OF THE SCREEN

A report on two British Film Academy discussions

THE British Film Academy recently held two most successful discussion meetings. Under the Chairmanship of Lord Grantley, Peter Ustinov and Benn Levy opened the debate on the decline of British comedy. Ustinov began by contrasting the humour of the past with that of the present; the Shakespearean pun and the patterned, artificial comedy of the 17th-18th centuries have given way to the relaxed, throw-away humour of to-day. Humour to-day must be set off against the serious: tragi-comedy fits the uncertain values of our time.

Benn Levy agreed that all good comedy is tragi-comic, and suggested that Bergson's theory of comedy (which is based on the principle of the humour of incongruity) is the right one. We are, he said, living in a period which is perfect for such comedy: people are taking themselves and their organisations far too seriously. But true humour cannot be produced scientifically out of the planned use of gag-books: it results from an oblique view of life which can be found in the best work of Coward, Chaplin, Waugh, Maugham, Shaw and the Marx Brothers. Humour must be born, not made artifically; this natural kind of humour is virtually absent from contemporary British films.

Among the speakers from the floor, Harry Watt said that as far as films were concerned it was the comic situation built up visually which counted far more than mere comic dialogue: few British directors had a true feeling for comic situations. Levy replied that a laugh based on a line often condensed the whole situation between two characters into a miniature. Sidney Cole thought that our modern excess of naturalism on the screen did not help comedy which needed more fantasy of setting and situation for its development. T. E. B. Clarke said that the pomposity of the present time offered fine material for a "de-bunking" kind of comedy. Roger Manvell thought we had become too genteel in Britain, too much afraid of upsetting people's feelings: what was needed was more genuine vulgarity and, where necessary, more cruelty in the humorous exposure of all that is stifling in contemporary life.

Peter Ustinov felt that comedy evolves from the playing off of people against each other: this may well be tragic, but it is comic, too. There was also a difference between comedy which depended on the personality of an outstanding comedian and comedy which did not. Benn Levy agreed with a suggestion that the present economics of film production stood against the individualism which is the essence of creative comedy. Lord Grantley felt there

was a danger that we should be having soon a cycle of British film comedies, planned in the "back-room" and produced against the grain of our directors and actors.

The general feeling of the meeting was that comedy is now needed more than ever in the British film, but that it could not be forced. It must be created by artists who had the true feeling for the humour of our times, and that it would probably be tragi-comic in style.

Roger Manvell took the chair at the second meeting on the Freedom of the Screen, in which Dilys Powell and Jill Craigie opened the discussion. Dilys Powell confined her initial remarks to the effects of the censorship, which she pointed out were essentially protective and reflected the mood of the general public. Only a small section of the community can be in advance of the general public, and literature is able to cater directly for this minority in the way the film too seldom can. The need in films is to raise gradually the level of public receptiveness, and there the creative artist can help. He can make the public listen to things they would normally be disinclined to hear because of the warmth he is able to give to values strange to people living restricted lives.

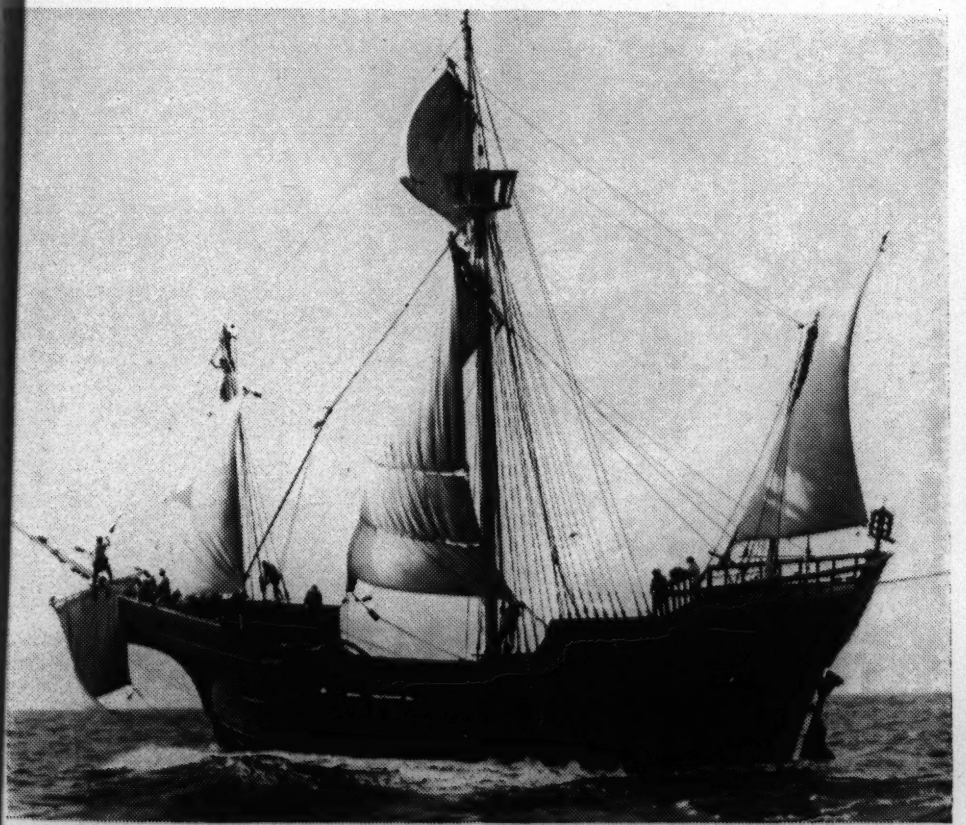
Jill Craigie followed up with a direct attack on the conditions with which film makers were faced. First, she said that the policy of the newsreels was completely second-hand: the Press showed far greater freedom of comment. Next she thought the C.O.I. had increasingly adopted the squeamishness of the civil-servant outlook on controversial issues since the War. As far as feature films were concerned, there was freedom only for those who had nothing to say. Although there was room for all kinds of entertainment in the cinema, she said, we have lost our warmth of contact with the community since the War. The ordinary people of this country should be seriously as well as dramatically represented on the screen, and trivialities like crime melodramas should not be allowed to remain the distributors' sole measure of excellence.

Several speakers then pointed out that the C.O.I. sponsored most of its films for specialised audiences, and that these films were socially important. The old-fashioned views of distributors on public taste and the practice of script-vetting by distributors were then attacked. The marketing of stars seems to be the prime concern of the industry, with the result that subjects had to conform to the stars available. Unusual films could not find distribution: independent producers should be in a better position to distribute their own product. The creation of a new category of censorship (the full "A" category, or a specialised category which excluded children from the cinema) was discussed, and the need for a chain of cinemas through which the less conventional kind of film could be made available to the public.

In thanking the speakers, the Chairman emphasised the importance of the film makers and the film critics meeting periodically to discuss problems affecting the art of the film. To get adequate

(*Continued on page* 40)

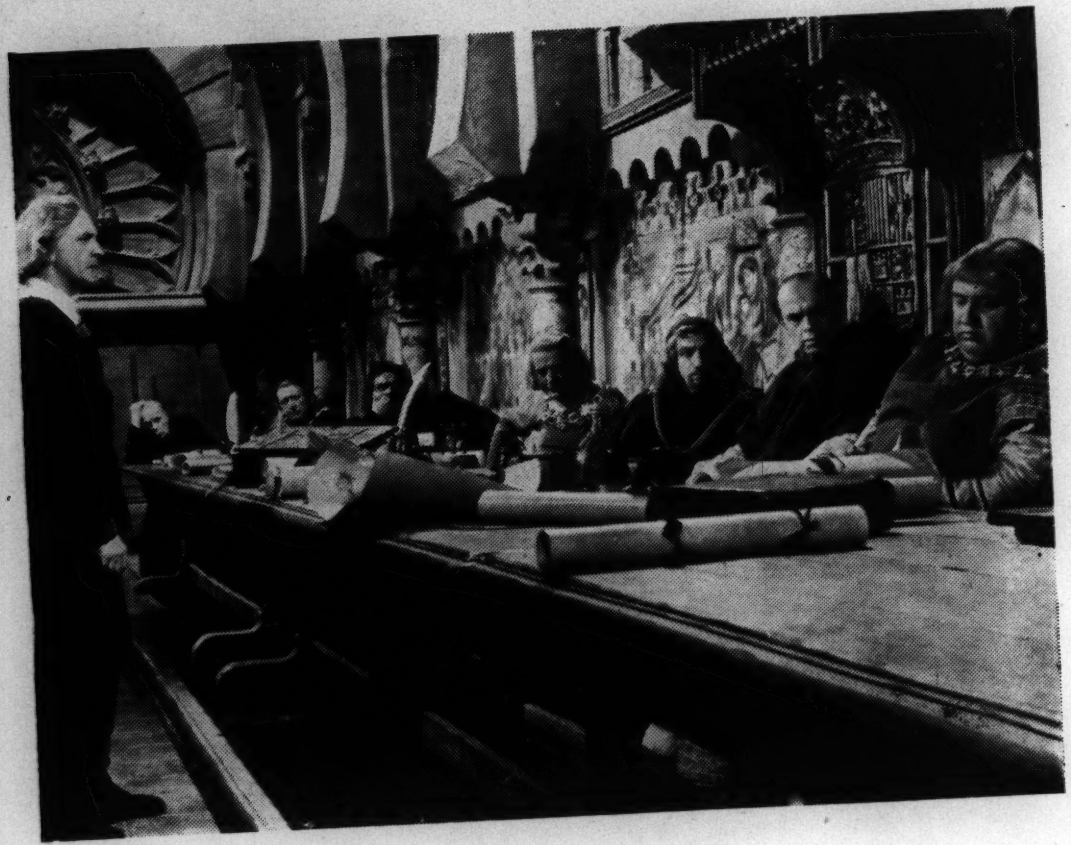
STRICTLY PICTORIAL



The " Santa Maria." This authentic reproduction of Columbus's flag-ship was specially built for Gainsborough's new Technicolor production, *Christopher Columbus*. Producer—Frank Bundy. Director—David Macdonald.

Beatriz de Peraza (Linden Travers) tries to dissuade Christopher Columbus (Fredric March) from setting out for the New World.

Diego de Arana (Derek Bond) is curious about the business of Columbus who is awaiting an interview with the Queen.



Bobadilla (Francis L. Sullivan) attempts to discredit Columbus's information about the New World.

An electric alarm-clock is one of the many wedding presents that Sally Ann Howes receives in *Fools Rush In.*

Sally Ann Howes with Nigel Buchanan, who plays the part of the jilted bridegroom

"Fools Rush In"

Charles Victor

Producer Aubrey Baring

Patricia Raine

Director John Paddy Carstairs

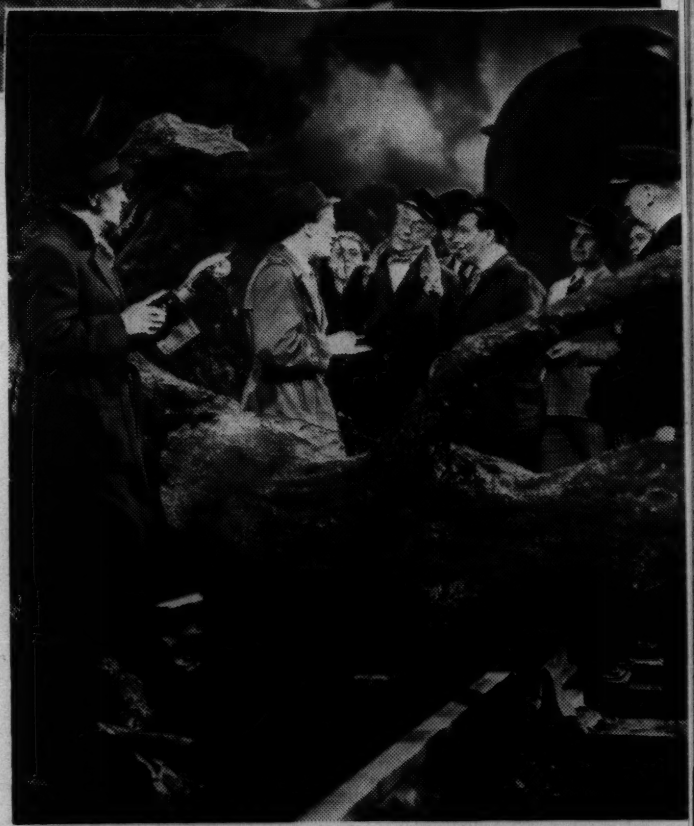
Nora Nicholson

Fred (Basil Radford) and his assistant (Naunton Wayne) listen for the cuckoo.

Stop Press Girl

Producer Donald B. Wilson

Directors—Michael Barry and Frederick Wilson.



Jock Melville (Gordon Jackson), a reporter, asks some questions.

Jock Melville meets Jennifer Peters (Sally Ann Howes) in a railway compartment.

Jock and Jennifer jump from an aircraft that has stalled.

THE SECOND FEATURE

by FRANK HOARE

(Reprinted by courtesy of the British Film Academy)

AS everybody knows, this unfortunate title with its implications of inferiority has now been out-moded by the Cinematograph Films Act, 1948, which set up a separate quota for "films distributed otherwise than as first features." Colloquially known as "supporting" films, all that part of the public-cinema programme which comes between the first feature and the newsreel can now be looked upon as a unit of which a fixed percentage (at present 25 per cent.) of the total footage must be British. It no longer matters from a quota standpoint whether the films concerned are long or short. Moreover, a minimum labour cost test is applied in an effort to prevent at any rate the lowest quality getting a quota ticket. Thus Parliament has done its best to make an honest woman of the second feature despite her dreadful past!

It seems clear that, however wrong-headed, the public demand is for a two-feature show, but whether this results from an unwillingness on the part of exhibitors to experiment with alternatives, or merely from a desire on the part of the public to spend 3½ hours in a warm, dark theatre is not clear! Certainly there is no lack of evidence that, taken by and large, the supporting programme is regarded as disgracefully poor, not only by the cinema-goer of high intelligence, but by the vast majority of patrons. It's a pity that they are not more forthright in voicing their objections to what Sir Stafford Cripps has called "those second features which disgrace our screens."

In my view, the trouble mainly derives from the exhibitors' attitude to this part of the programme. It's true that some exhibitors—very few and rare exceptions—approach the business of programme-building on a selective basis realising, as one exhibitor put it to me the other day, that "a bad second feature can kill the attraction of a good first feature." But how many really get the chance, even if they were disposed to take the trouble, to consider how best to book a balanced programme such as will make an appeal to the widest possible cross-section of the public? Yet at the same time exhibitors complain about falling box-office receipts!

Most exhibitors look merely for what they revealingly call "footage" to fill up programme time to the usual 3½ hours or so, which means that anything from 75 to 90 minutes are taken up with stuff, the only merit of which is that it can be bought for next to nothing.

The other day I saw a copy of a letter from a well-known exhibitor accepting the terms demanded by a distributor for a first feature of under 9,000 feet and adding "of course you must make it up to a minimum of 12,500 feet." In other words "you must throw in about 4,000 feet of supporting films for nothing." If it's ever going to be worth while for producers to make good supporting films, this kind of thing must be stopped—if necessary by legislation.

There is clearly a serious tendency on the part of exhibitors to underrate the intelligence and critical capacity of the public. Hundreds of thousands of people

never go to the cinema because, having given it a trial, they regard the majority of the programme as an insult to their intelligence. It's the hardest job in the world to get a well-made documentary widely shown in this country—not because the public do not enjoy them but because of the prejudices that exist within the industry. I'm not pleading for the highbrow approach, or for the use of the cinemas for so-called cultural and educational purposes. I agree that the essential criterion is entertainment, but I do challenge the view that you have to leave your brains at home when you go out to be entertained!

Somebody may very well ask—can we produce good supporting features in this country? I am convinced that there is no doubt about it. We have over a thousand technicians who have learned their craft in the hard school and who are capable of turning out admirable short story pictures on themes of universal appeal. Why don't they do it? Simply because the existing conditions make it impossible for producers to get back their modest production costs from distribution receipts, and until this is changed the best producers will continue to work on sponsored films for non-theatrical showings.

The well-intentioned British public pours out over a hundred million pounds every year at the box-offices of the cinemas. If as little as two per cent. of this sum found its way to the producers of supporting films, something like fifty second features and a couple of hundred good shorts could be made—and the public demand for variety and interest in its film fare could be largely met. Hundreds of technicians, now out of jobs alas, could find satisfactory and remunerative employment. A steady and permanent production flow could be maintained which would represent a valuable stabilising factor in an industry more prone than most to instability and uncertainty.

Much of any analysis of the present position is inevitably economic and financial in character. But there is another side to it. I should like to see the opportunity given to this branch of the production industry to develop a truly British type of picture—revealing all the wealth of character and quality which go to make up the British scene and way of life. We look with envy at the work of the French and Italian craftsmen and wonder why there is no corresponding school of British production which can portray the best in comedy and in sentiment from the many-sided phases of life in this country. **In the quest for world markets for British films, we have largely failed to develop any basic national character in our pictures—tending to limp after Hollywood—often with pretty dire results. The second feature and the short can provide the vehicle for correcting this tendency. Such films made on modest budgets, largely on location, would bring back the breath of life and freedom of expression to an industry which seems more and more weighed down and stultified by its economic difficulties. Let's get rid of these artifically contrived plots and stereotyped situations and give the cinema screens that reality and freshness which are the basis of true entertainment.**

This can I am sure be done by a new approach to the so-called "second feature"—an approach which calls for the co-operation of exhibitor, distributor and producer.

Too many people appear to believe that the difficulties of the film production industry, whether in first features or others, can be solved by constant appeal for Government action. Surely the

(*Continued on page* 40)

MUSIC FOR THE MOVIES

By Louis Levy

(*Sampson Low, Marston,* 10*s.* 6*d.*)

Louis Levy, composer, arranger, conductor and impresario, has been associated with film music for a quarter of a century. His very interesting book deals with the various aspects of this subject; it also traces the evolution of film music from the days of the cinema piano.

Mr. Levy includes a quite enlightening chapter on crowd artistes, although some of his facts about their rates of pay are now somewhat out of date.

THE LIFE STORY OF DANNY KAYE

By Dick Richards

(*Convoy Publications,* 5*s.*)

Dick Richards, of the "Sunday Pictorial," has written a warmly human account of this great comic's career.

We learn that "There is one thing that slightly irks the usually bland, good-tempered Danny Kaye. It is when he is so frequently described as 'an overnight sensation.'

"It's true that his success—when it came—was sudden and sensational. He rocketed from obscurity into the big-time in little more than a year.

"'But,' argues Kaye, 'people seem to forget that for twelve years I played every one-horse dump in the States and beat my brains out all over the world looking for a break.'"

The very fine introduction is written by that great British comedian, Sid Field. And there are fifty illustrations.

THE CINEMA TO-DAY

By D. A. Spencer and H. D. Waley

(*Oxford University Press,* 7*s.* 6*d.*)

Comprehensively describes the technical side of photography, recording and film projection. There are also chapters on "The Film Yesterday and To-day" and "The Film as a Social Force." Although a reprint of the original 1939 edition, this excellent book is well worth study to-day. Amply illustrated and lucidly written.

PRESS, FILM, RADIO

(*Unesco, Paris,* 6*s.*)

This Report of the Commission on Technical Needs is the second of the Unesco surveys. Dealing mainly with Latin America and the Far East—the only European countries covered are Austria, Hungary and Italy — detailed descriptions of the different film industries are given, including methods of professional training. An invaluable work of reference

The Paris Scene

by PETER SIMMONS

"Film Monthly Review" Paris Correspondent

THE French Cinema has been ill—some people say that it is still ill—but at first sight, at any rate, the invalid seems to be active enough. A large number of films has been issued during the past months and many more are due for their Paris premières in the near future.

Particularly striking among the films now showing is H. G. Clouzot's adaptation of *Manon.* Its photography (Camera: Armand Thirard) is among the best in recent years. The images are superb—dynamic, beautifully composed they are full of remarkable qualities of light and shade. As a whole, *Manon* is forceful and realistic—at times even relentless. For Clouzot is a director who does not pull his punches. And yet as a modern-dress version of the story of "Manon Lescaut," it does not succeed. Clouzot's story somehow fails to strike the emotions and one is left somewhat indifferent to the tragic fate of Manon and her lover. Tragedy is seen but not felt.

The part of Manon is played by Cécile Aubry, an extremely voluptuous young blonde whose first film this is. Despite her charms and an undeniable acting ability, she does not seem to have the stature that the part requires. The same must be said of Michel Auclair, the male lead.

Clouzot, whose exciting crime film, *Quai des Orfèvres,* is currently being revived in Paris, is said to be now working on an idea for a new film—a light and happy film, for a change.

The list of cast and credits of *The Lovers of Verona* is an exciting one. Script by Jacques Prévert, Camera by Alekan, Music by Joseph Kosma . . . and among the performers, Pierre Brasseur, Louis Salou, Martine Carol, and Anouk. The lead is taken by Serge Reggiani, a young actor who is currently very popular over here. Yet, despite all these "names," the film is disappointing.

The story of a local boy and girl who meet and fall in love whilst playing stand-in parts for the principal couple in a Romeo and Juliet film has a great deal of charm. It contains many sincere passages and claims the attention, but it fails to rise to great heights. Possibly this is because it lacked the touch of a master-hand in the direction. André Cayatte, who directed, has as yet no top-line film to his credit. The film is somewhat uneven, but it contains some sensitive photography of Venice and Verona and some lyrical sequences. Pierre Brasseur is given plenty of scope for the exaggerated type of playing at which he is so good; Anouk is charming as the young girl; and Marcel Dalio and Louis Salou both give good performances.

Ever-popular Louis Jouvet is currently to be seen in a Henri Decoin crime film, *Between Eleven O'Clock and Midnight.* This is a well-made picture with an amusing plot in which Police-Inspector Jouvet temporarily steps into the shoes of a dead gangster whom he exactly resembles.

(*Continued on page 32*)

... and the INTERNATIONAL SCENE

BY H. H. WOLLENBERG

STOCKHOLM

PRODUCER Lorenz Marmstadt began making his film *Singoalla,* which he thinks will be the biggest picture made in Sweden for some time. It is being produced in Swedish, English and French versions, and the production unit is truly international. Its story, based on a stage play by the late dramatist Victor Rydberg, is about gipsy life, and its director is no less an artist than Christian Jaque, the Frenchman whose latest work, *De l'Homme à l'Homme* (From Man to Man), about the founder of the International Red Cross, won international recognition. Viveca Lindfors, just back from Hollywood, plays the title part, with Lauritz Falk as her principal partner. The technical team consists largely of French experts. Among the artistes engaged in the English version is Romney Brent, who arrived from Hollywood some weeks ago. The film is expected to be ready for the cutting-room by the end of June.

ROME

The big event, of course, of the Italian film scene, and, in fact, an event of international significance, is the first Rossellini-Bergman picture now in production. The teaming up as an independent production concern of Hollywood's brilliant Swedish Star No. 1 and the Italian who shook the movie-world with *Open City, Paisa* and *Germany Year Zero* is, in itself, a spectacular move. Small wonder then that Ingrid's first Press conference after her arrival in Rome bore the stamp of a "great occasion." Under Roberto's directorship she plays a woman of Nordic origin who, in a D.P. camp near Rome, happens to meet a Southerner; they fall in love, get married, and he takes her to his home on the small volcanic Island of Stromboli. Alas, the woman cannot adapt herself to her new life in such strange surroundings; she leaves her husband and flees to the near-by mountains. But at last her mind is changed by fresh impressions and thoughts. That much has so far been divulged about the story of the first Bergman-Rossellini production to which we all are looking forward with unusual interest.

TOKIO

The Japanese nature seems to be changing, according to this

Press-agency report :—A thousand workers at the Toho Studios went on a sit-down strike in protest against numerous sackings. They occupied all the buildings. When the police stepped in, the workers set the wind-machine in motion, blowing sand on to them. At last, the policemen worked their way through to the studios proper. Here, however, they were facing 45 film actresses, armed with the hoses of the studio's fire engines, who gave them a good shower. After this, American occupation forces were called in; they arrived at the battle-ground in light tanks. Peace negotiations were eventually opened and concluded successfully.

PRAGUE

The post-war Czechoslovak film has come to international recognition by such productions as Frantisek Cap's *Men Without Wings* and Karel Stekly's *The Strike,* both prize-winners at the Cannes and Venice Festivals respectively. Otakar Vavra, too, introduced himself with two important films, *Dangerous Youth* and *Krakatit;* the latter (based on a Capek novel) is about a future war and atomic warfare. He is now completing *Silent Barricade,* with the Prague uprising during the last days of the recent war as the background. Another film, *Wolf Track,* recently released, showed the Slovak uprising in 1944. A new picture by Martin Fric, *Lost in Prague,* deals with the problems of readjustment to civilian life of a man who returns home after the war; it is to be released shortly. Jiri Krejcik has also completed his new production, *Conscience,* which portrays the psychological conflict of a man who has trespassed against both society and his family. Nearing completion is Alfred Radok's first picture, a screen adaptation of Eric Kolar's *Distant Journey,* dealing with the tragic fates of Czech Jews under the Nazi occupation. These subjects indicate the present trend in Czechoslovak studios towards serious contemporary problems. However, there is some lighter stuff, too, in the making, including a satire on the hyper-sentimental type of motion picture! A comedy, recently completed by Josef Mach and entitled *Village Revolt,* depicts life in a new Czech village in an amusing manner.

The Paris Scene (*Continued from page* 30)

Jouvet is first rate, and the supporting parts are well cast.

Entirely different in character is *L'Ecole Buissonnière.* There is really no exact English translation of this title, but it signifies a village school where the pupils take their lessons in the fields.

Set in the 1920's, the story tells of a young schoolmaster who comes to take over a small school in the Southern French mountains. He has very advanced ideas on educational methods and these conflict with the strict disciplinarian conceptions of the old, retiring master. The new arrival soon wins over the children but has to face tremendous opposition from a certain faction in the village.

In the end, progress triumphs. This is a sincere, well-made,

Cécile Aubry and Michel Auclair in "Manon."

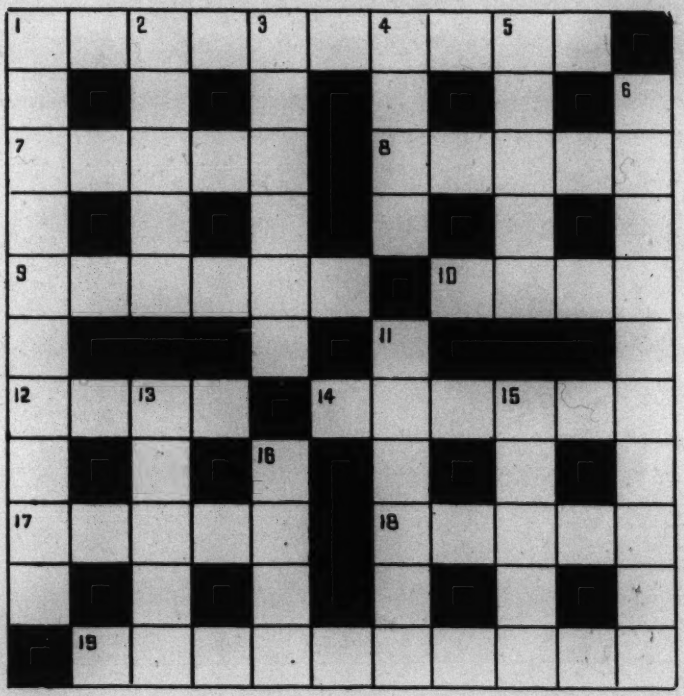
unpretentious film, based on a series of events that actually happened. It is rather slow, but there are some pleasingly sunny exteriors and the children act extremely naturally. The young schoolmaster is played with conviction by Bernard Blier.

Alice in Wonderland, filmed in Ansco-Colour, was made in France by a French director, Louis Bunin, working in collaboration with Dallas Bower. It is a part-live, and part-puppet film with mainly an English cast. Carol Marsh is seen as Alice and the dances were arranged by Roland Petit. More of this in the near future.

Finally, a mention of Sacha Guitry, who recently has been busy making a film version of his successful stage play, "Aux Deux Colombes," a story of a Paris lawyer who is involved with two wives and another woman all at the same time. Although there were six months of preparation, the actual filming was done in fifteen days, which must be something of a record.

FILM CROSSWORD No. 18

SOLUTION NEXT MONTH



CLUES ACROSS AND DOWN

1. Film music maker (10).
1. Down.—Jack Buchanan film of 1930 (5, 5).
2. Zinc ornament used on stage and films to imitate jewellery (5).
3. This British star is making films in Hollywood (6).
4. Hitchcock film (4).
5. Negotiate a loan for this actor (5).
6. A Berner film (6, 4).
7. First name of Mr. Patrick and Mr. Buchanan (5).
8. Mills played one in "The Way to the Stars" (5).
9. Change a star of "Crossfire" into a number (6).
10. Indigo plant in film "Manila Calling" (4).
11. He's in "The Bad Lord Byron" (6).
12. "——of Triumph" (4).
13. French director and family name in "South Riding" (5).
14. City in an Attenborough film title (6).
15. The cliffs of this town are often shown in films (5).
16. Alms in the film of Walter Greenwood's play (4).
17. Heard in "The Great Handel" (5).
18. We often get a farewell dedication in films, this is for a poem or book (5).
19. Hollywood menace who starred in two British films before going to America.

FAREWELL, NEWS-REELS !

by Paul Nugat

This contributor wishes cinema news-reels a speedy departure and welcomes television

THE one piece of realism and immediacy in a cinema programme is the news-reel. The French have a far more descriptive word—*Les Actualités*. Today, it is a noun of faded accuracy: television has outmoded it. It means passing events, but what the French need now is a noun meaning "events passed."

I don't imagine the French will spend any time searching for another noun. For one thing is certain—television can lay claim to the title of *"Actualité"* in a way that makes the disappearance of the cinema news-reel a foregone conclusion. A recent report that six news-reel theatres were already contemplating a switch to the showing of French films seems to indicate that film exhibitors have no intention of being caught by the depressing sight of dwindling "houses."

Lack of Style

Personally, I shall not be sorry to see replaced by other fare the ten minutes now allotted to the news-reels. They have always irritated me, because of their lack of style, signature, and "phoney" objectivity. They are at a disadvantage in comparison with their counterpart, the daily newspapers, in having no declared political affiliations, and, therefore, no proven bias. In a world where sectional interests are as evident as ever before, to be unbiased is either a pretence at objectivity, or it is bias concealed as objectivity. The editor of a news-reel cannot escape from this situation any more than can the editor of a newspaper. But the difference is—the editor of your newspaper does not attempt to. A newspaper editor knows you read his paper, amongst a host of other things, for his presentation and slanting of the news. The editor of a news-reel knows that you see his news-reel not through any fault or particular desire of your own, but because you happen to be in the cinema to see the feature film and anything else that has been thrown in for good measure.

Thus his approach to news presentation is much more pious. If he is an honest man, he is very conscious of his responsibilities (which run into millions of viewers), and, in consequence, he attempts to be very fair. And if the topic is controversial, he fails miserably.

No Proper Balance

Let us take an imaginary example. Let us say that Tip Top News-reels have persuaded Sir Stafford Cripps to talk about his latest budget. Sir Stafford

will naturally reproduce the arguments he used in the House of Commons to explain why no tax alleviation was possible. (Incidentally, this is one of my strong objections to news-reels. The news is always so stale.) After Sir Stafford's speech, Tip Top go all democratic. They hunt up some forlorn housewife in Wapping and drag her over to the microphone.

"Well, Mrs. X," says the benign commentator, "what do you think of the budget?" Mrs. X who has been heard using strong language in the fish queue on this very topic, suddenly comes over all coy at the very majesty of the position she so temporarily holds.

"Well, I *am* disappointed. I must say I am. I suppose if we keep grumbling along, we'll get by in the end."

"Thank you," says the commentator, having discharged his duty to democracy. Of course, Mrs. X may have said a lot more besides, which had to be carefully edited. But this is not the point I want to make. This is an instance (I hope imaginary) of what I called "phoney" objectivity. To put up an informed speaker against an uninformed speaker, is not my interpretation of balancing viewpoints. If Tip Top News-reels had sought out the opinion of an economist, known to hold widely divergent views from Sir Stafford, their claim to impartiality would have been substantiated as far as is possible. Mrs. X's opinions could still have been used as the tail-piece, but not as the answer to an informed opinion.

I imagine that most readers of "Film Monthly Review" can recall several cases parallel to the above piece.

Why Aren't they Controversial?

As Mr. Priestley said in a recent article: "Surely one of the most serious evils of this Cold War period is that the conflict itself has stopped people thinking." My criticism of news-reels is, fundamentally, that they have failed to start people thinking. They rightly claim the liberty enjoyed by the Press to express their own views unequivocally and through their own jaundiced eye. Yet, on a major issue of the day, I cannot remember a single news-reel which ran counter to the two main streams of popular thought since the end of the war.

I am not sure that news-reel companies really do enjoy this liberty of free expression. On the other hand, if they do not, it is due to their own lack of exertion, or, again, in the name of objectivity.

A visitor to our shores, who was also a cinema addict, asked me, at the end of his stay, who the Prime Minister was. The question arose because Mr. Churchill had been so much more in evidence than Mr. Attlee—on the news-reels. He could not understand it at all. Even my explanations about fair play, Western Union, etc., made no impression upon him.

"In a real democracy," he said, "that would never happen." The poor chap came from America.

However, news-reels are on the transfer list to television; soon I shall at least be able to switch off.

ABOVE ALL – THE SCREENPLAY

BY ANDRÉ BELHOMME

THERE is a delightful old anecdote about the managing director of a firm who took a vacation at Cannes, and everything went on as smoothly as ever. But when the messenger went to his well-earned romp at a holiday camp, the office was in chaos!

It is not being suggested that the screenwriter is the office boy of the film industry, but we must admit that his importance is not exactly raved about. Bless the stars, the producer, the director, the technicians and the clapper-boy as well; but the film began with, and largely depends upon, the screenplay . . . and what thoughts, ideas, inspiration and policy preceded its creation.

Different Sources

A glance at several of the present sources of film material will reveal some virtues, many faults.

First, the short story, written primarily for newspaper, magazine or book. As John W. Collier pointed out, in a recent issue, the idea implicit in the story, however good, needs a lot of padding. The screenwriter, having used every cinematic subterfuge to enhance its screen value, will be the first to admit that.

Then, the novel, which rarely makes a wholly satisfying film. At least one of the reasons for audiences being disappointed is that they just "didn't see it that way." Of course not; the reader of a book has his own, individual imagination stimulated by the situations and dialogue. It is bound to conflict with the producer's and the director's interpretation.

To a degree this point also applies to the play that has been filmed. The comparative leisure enjoyed in watching a play gives one some repose in which to think, imagine and fill in, from a personal point of view—in direct contrast to the racing and often disturbing film cuts. Even allowing for the fact that most cinema audiences will not have seen a new play, and have no preconceived notions, the stage medium is different, obviously. The film adaptation is only occasionally successful.

The biographical film is often more acceptable. Amazing how the *life* of someone, intelligently handled, can provide vital film material.

Original Screen Stories

Granted that many films have been good, even brilliant, when based on the sources above; but in

a splendid, isolated sphere is the story *originally conceived on filmic lines.* If the film's conception starts here, then wonderful vistas of creative firmament are opened up.

Original ideas, which depend for their appeal on unusual plot-twists? Indeed, yes.

Something startling, experimental? Again, yes.

A story which is not particularly original but which can be lifted into cinematic success by fine, artistic treatment? Of course, whether it be comedy or drama. All these approaches to original screenplays have already reaped worth-while rewards.

What about the situation-film, into which the characters have obviously been fitted, like hastily-combed wigs on painfully bald pates? This method of subordinating the characters to the story often results in stultifying screen fare. Directors have a nasty knack of winning our interest in a character (often in a supporting role), and then cutting him from the film forever.

It is patent that in many cases not enough attention is given to sustained characterisation. A war-time picture, *Brief Encounter,* is surely a classic because its story was lived out by very real characters, who stole into our hearts.

Stories with Roots in Life

One is not advocating that there is no place whatsoever for films with an origin in novels, stories or plays. The purpose of this article is to emphasise the grandeur of character, as such. For it is a vast reservoir of interest; real, breathing people can be an excellent starting point in film creation. The funny way in which a bent old man is scratching his nose may be infinitely more interesting than half a dozen glamorous ladies stepping out of sleeky cars.

Places are made by people, and people by places. Britain itself must be saturated with stories that have their roots in the lives of its people. Every city probably has a host of intriguing tales inherent in its history and inhabitants. Many a village must have had an event, the memory of which is so powerful and poignant, that it still wafts round the age-greened walls.

Message to Producers

Mr. Producer, why not commission "young" screenwriters, who have shown definite promise, to go out into the highways and byways of Britain? To meet the people . . . the sun-blistered skipper of the seaside "Skylark," the village parson, the big-city pawnbroker, the firemen . . . the taxi-driver. For here indeed is a wealth of material.

Personal contact with the people is bound to result in two things—a deep, authentic insight into *real* character, and the discovery of a multitude of events through which these people have lived; "truth is stranger . . ."

Expediency would demand a balancing of fact and fiction, in order to produce a film of continuous dynamic interest. The cost of this scheme would be repaid, one feels, in the quality of the film's concept and its ultimate financial success at the box-office.

Let a whiff of virgin air, a puff of city smoke, a new-born raindrop, a smile, a tear, a laugh, a sob . . . let *people* into your story conference.

Candid Comments

by

JOHN W. COLLIER

IN the welter of pros and cons about the film crisis one aspect receives little comment. It is that, whether or not a British film industry can be made to pay (dividends), we ought to foster such an industry if only in self-defence against alien ideas.

Since childhood, most of us have been pelted and pestered with films which have an "American way of life" as background. Such a bombardment inevitably has some effect. Its most obvious results have been a modification of the English language (not necessarily a bad thing, of course). It has also introduced mass hysteria in the form of bobby-soxers, the adulation of crooner-swooners and the degradation of the age-old cult of hero worship.

It is true that the so-called "American way of life" as represented on the screen is, in the main, a "phoney" one, bearing scant relationship to the lives of the little people of America or to the rapacity of American big business. These things are hidden behind a maudlin sentimentality or a jejune attempt at heroic toughness. If we saw the real America, the real American people in their rich and fascinating variety, then nothing but gain in our understanding would result. As it is, we have been steeped in the meretricious and bombarded by falsity.

Basic Assumptions

The difficulty is to nail down the insidious propagation of wrong ideas and to trace their influence on the behaviour patterns of masses of people. The influence of films on such things as hair styles and dress fashions has been traced often enough. Sometimes these are calculated effects directly promoted by commercial interests. (And in this field Mr. Rank's Britain now slavishly follows suit.) Periodically, too, there is a suggestion that the misconduct of small boys is attributed to their having looked on the screen when it was ill-bred.

In general, however, the development is not so simple. It is not a direct question of what a film says, but of the assumptions that it makes. Two examples arise from that excellent film, *Treasure of Sierra Madre*. At one point, inevitably in this context, there is a fight with Indians. It follows that the Indians are portrayed as bandits: critics and public accept them as such, Yet the notion is utterly false. In so

far as such incidents are based upon historical happenings, these Indians were not bandits but an early and valiant resistance movement fighting against the foreign invader. The point may have little direct bearing upon the internal politics of America to-day, and in that sense it is academic. But the danger is that we get used to the idea that native resistance to the lordly whites is inevitably wrong, and by extension this carries condemnation of the "bandits" in Malaya, Greece, China and a number of other countries. How useful for the carriers of the "White Man's Burden" and the dealers in tin, rubber, the keepers of strategic bases!

A Man's World

The second example stems from the fact that *Treasure of Sierra Madre* is an all-male picture and is one of a number, American and British, made or on the stocks, where the woman interest is absent. All heroic films, and many others, are films about men. However, this is not a plea for the arbitrary interpolation of "love interest" and female relief. In some senses the predominance of the film male is inevitable, since, with numerous distortions, it is a man-made world that is reflected. But without searching for special stories to "exploit" unusual or heroic women, why not introduce more film women into the parts that they increasingly play in life. Must all screen (and stage) doctors, lawyers, administrators, journalists, be men? Must women be restricted to sweethearts and wives, stenographers and "molls"? But The Place of Women is one of those questions where the backward assumptions of yesterday are current in the films of to-day.

(*Continued from page* 18)

finance for the unconventional film, it would be necessary to create a large international chain of specialised cinemas prepared regularly to exhibit the product. **Meanwhile, danger lay in too great a technical escapism, in which film makers put everything into the finish of a film and too little into its subject.**

(*Continued from page* 28)

basic organisation of this tripartite industry is something which should be corrected internally in the interests of all parties. It is fundamentally unsound that exhibitors and producers—the two essential elements—should not only be at arm's length but all too often at daggers drawn! We cannot make progress without faith and confidence in each other and the quicker we realise it the better for all concerned. Whatever is in store for the film industry generally, there is no doubt that so far as second features are concerned—to use a crisp American phrase—"anywhere from here is up!"

Solution to Film Crossword No. 17, May, 1949

Clues Across.—1, Claude Rains. 7, Alida. 8, Years. 9, Nob. 10, Moira. 11, O'Dea. 12, Dru. 14, Stye. 16, Limit. 19, Cut. 20, Trunk. 21, Idaho. 22, Hubert Gregg.

Clues Down.—1, Charms. 2, Alibi. 3, Diana Decker. 4, Roy Boulting. 5, Image. 6, Suss. 13, Strong. 15, Thumb. 17, Mease. 18, Itch.

FILM REVIEWS

CARDBOARD CAVALIER

If your standards of humour are not too highbrow, and if you can derive amusement from comic situations rather than from witty repartee, then you will enjoy *Cardboard Cavalier.* This Walter Forde production has been badly let down by an unworthy screenplay. There are very few lines in the film which on their own merit would raise a laugh. Nevertheless, Sid Field, as Sidcup Buttermeadow, the simple-minded barrow-boy, manages to shift the attention from this inadequacy, and out of the situations which are forced upon him, by dint of erratically superb acting, creates a havoc of humour.

It is a pleasant change to see Margaret Lockwood in a comedy role. She is obviously happier in such a part, although she herself is not particularly funny. As instigator and stooge, however, she is a worthy supplement to Sidcup's predicaments. The part of Lady Agnes, the castle ghost, is delightfully played by Irene Handl, and there is a good performance from Edmund Willard as Cromwell.

CAPTAIN FROM CASTILE

Captain from Castile, deals, in the main, with the Cortez expedition to the New World, and this aspect of the film is exciting and highly cinematic. Unfortunately, the Cortez expedition, though seemingly the pivot of the story, is used to supplement a tale which is crude and trivial in the extreme. The love affair between Catana (Jean Peters), a poor peasant girl, and the Captain himself, Pedro (Tyrone Power), is punctuated by a series of events which all culminate in near-mortal blows for our hero. But he manages to recover each time so that the story may continue, which it does in this vein for nearly two and a half hours.

There are, however, some very fine scenes; perhaps the most spectacular is the final procession of Cortez's army and its followers. Cesar Romero, as Cortez, and Lee Cobb, as Garcia, give convincing performances.

JOAN OF ARC

There is little in the way of advertisement, research, scenery, costume, etc., that has been spared in the Wanger-Fleming production of *Joan of Arc.* Paradoxically

enough, the orgy of expense lavished on this film is the very cause of its downfall. For Joan the Maid is no longer the simple peasant girl who retains her simplicity throughout her story. Ingrid Bergman, though she may look like the Child of God, is seriously hampered in this impersonation by the somewhat sophisticated production. Most of the characters over-act, because it seems that they fear that the story is not big enough to maintain them. But there is nothing disproportionate between the material and its instruments. The simplicity of Joan's story is what makes it enduring; its sensationalism lies in the fact that she herself was so unsensational; and it is convincing because Joan *was* convinced.

Had the producers been satisfied with this very simple data, some worth-while tension would have been ever-present. As it stands, there is little tension in the film, and it seems twice its actual length.

B.N.

News from the Studios (*Continued from page* 16)

Cineguild is well to the forefront in this respect. Ronald Neame is in Tunisia making *The Golden Salamander,* and after location there he returns home to Pinewood, where David Lean is directing *Madeleine,* in which Ann Todd stars with French actor Ivan Desny in the first film attempt at a description of the most controversial Scottish murder trial.

Robert Hamer has just left for France to make *The Spider and the Fly,* with Eric Portman. At Denham, the American director Edward Dmytryk has made a swift start to shooting on *Give Us this Day,* which is reputed to be the most powerful film script ever written. It is an adaptation of a short story written by an Italian about a workman who, while working in Brooklyn, is crushed and suffocated slowly to death in a hardening mould of freshly-made concrete.

Sydney Box's first Gainsborough production to be made by the Independent Frame process, *Boys in Brown,* is also at Pinewood, starring Richard Attenborough, Jimmy Hanley, Jack Warner and Dirk Bogarde in a story that illustrates life in a Borstal institution.

The Angel with the Trumpet, a period costume cavalcade about the fortunes of an aristocratic Austrian family through half a century, is midway through production under the Korda banner at Shepperton, and Robert Donat's *Cure for Love* is another full-scale London Films venture at Isleworth.

Ealing, with its comic mining story *The Lark* (Donald Houston, Alec Guinness, Moira Lister, Meredith Edwards); Elstree with an exciting love story set in wartime Britain entitled *Landfall* (Michael Denison, Patricia Plunkett); Welwyn and Elstree

ROBERT DONAT

with the strong divorce subject, *No Place for Jennifer* (Rosamund John, Leo Genn); Riverside with another original romantic yarn entitled *The Cord* (Valerie Hobson, Richard Todd); and Anatole de Grunwald's latest effort, *World Premiere*, at Teddington, are ample evidence that most British producers neglect the second-feature market to-day. This attitude cannot persist if the film industry is to remain solvent and stable.

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